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FM AMEMBASSY JAKARTA
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 3582
INFO RUCNARF/ASEAN REGIONAL FORUM COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RUEHLM/AMEMBASSY COLOMBO PRIORITY 1603
RUEHKA/AMEMBASSY DHAKA PRIORITY 1628
RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI PRIORITY 2724
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC PRIORITY
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC PRIORITY

UNCLAS JAKARTA 001728

SENSITIVE
SIPDIS

DEPT FOR EAP, EAP/MTS, EAP/MLS, EAP/PD, EAP/RSP, DRL
NSC FOR D. WALTON

E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PREF](#) [ID](#) [BM](#) [CE](#) [AF](#)
SUBJECT: SRI LANKAN IRREGULAR MIGRANTS STOPPED BY
INDONESIAN NAVY

REF: JAKARTA 00988 AND PREVIOUS

11. (SBU) SUMMARY: Irregular migrants from Sri Lanka are swelling the number of potential refugees seeking to transit Indonesia on their way to Australia. On October 12 an Indonesian warship intercepted a cargo ship that was carrying 253 Sri Lankan refugees in the Sunda Strait between West Java and Southern Sumatra. The Indonesian navy was reportedly tipped off by Australian Prime Minister Rudd, who called President Yudhyono over the weekend. The migrants are refusing to get off the ship for fear that they will be detained while the UNHCR investigates. As reported reftel, Indonesian immigration officials work closely with the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and UNHCR and irregular migrants are generally treated well while in Indonesia. END SUMMARY

NUMBER OF IRREGULAR MIGRANTS CONTINUES TO GROW

12. (SBU) As reported reftel, the number of irregular migrants transiting Indonesia on their way to Australia this year is on pace to quadruple over last year, primarily due to a surge from Afghanistan and other areas of conflict in South Asia. Beginning in May 2009, migrants from Sri Lanka are also adding to these numbers. (Note: 55 Sri Lankan men landed in Aceh in May.) Prime Minister Rudd called President Yudhyono over the weekend to let him know that undocumented intending immigrants were heading for the Sunda Strait, between West Java and Southern Sumatra. An Indonesian warship intercepted the cargo ship and led it to port in Banten, West Java. The Australians and Indonesians last met in July to discuss ways to stop the flow of irregular migrants.

SRI LANKANS FEARFUL OF BEING CAUGHT IN UNHCR PROCESS

13. (SBU) Although the press has reported that the irregular migrants would be kept in Banten and then transferred to an immigration detention center, Post's contact stated that only eight of the 253 refugees had disembarked. All eight, including one pregnant woman, were taken to a local hospital while the others hunkered down on the boat. Fueling the refugees' fears of being caught in limbo were reports that if they landed in Indonesia they would be turned over to the UNHCR for processing. In June 2009 the UNHCR began to process the above-mentioned 55 Sri Lankan refugees, many of whom are still waiting to be settled.

INDONESIAN IMMIGRATION WORKS TO FOLLOW THE RULES

14. (SBU) Immigration officials told us that they hoped to resolve this situation as quickly as possible. The IOM has

been notified and is on standby to assist when the refugees disembark. The GOI will wait until the irregular immigrants are on Indonesian soil before requesting UNHCR assistance.

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